



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Grand Canyon National Park

Shannan Marcak
928-638-7958

U.S. Forest Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Kaibab National Forest

Patrick Lair
928-643-8172



Interagency News Release

For Immediate Release

Contact(s): Shannan Marcak Patrick Lair
 928-638-7958 928-643-8172

Date: October 23, 2012

Fire Managers Are Making Plans for Two Prescribed Fires on Grand Canyon's North Rim

Grand Canyon, Ariz. – National Park Service (NPS) and U.S. Forest Service (USFS) fire managers, working together as the North Zone Interagency Fire Management Program, are making plans for the Range and Thompson Prescribed Fires on the North Rim of Grand Canyon National Park. Fire managers anticipate initiating these prescribed fire treatments within the next four weeks as weather and fuel moisture conditions allow.

Prescribed fires play an important role in decreasing risks to life, resources, and property. Fire managers carefully plan prescribed fires, initiating them only under environmental conditions that are favorable to assuring firefighter and visitor safety and to achieving the desired objectives. Objectives common to both prescribed fires include reducing accumulations of forest fuels, maintaining the natural role of fire in a fire-adapted ecosystem, and protection of sensitive cultural resources.

Both fires will be initiated using a combination of aerial and hand ignitions.

Range Prescribed Fire (Range Rx): The southern-most portion of the Range Burn Unit is located approximately 1.5 miles north of the North Rim Campground. From there, the burn unit extends northward between Highway 67 on the north and east and the Range Road (also known as the w1a road) on the west and southwest.

The Range Burn Unit is approximately 2,300 acres in size and is composed primarily of mixed conifer forest with spruce, fir, aspen, and ponderosa pine. The majority of the burn unit has not burned in recent years, resulting in a heavy build-up of dead and down fuels.

Objectives specific to the Range Rx include protecting and enhancing Mexican spotted owl habitat and reducing the potential for extreme fire behavior along Highway 67, the North Rim's primary egress route.

Thompson Prescribed Fire (Thompson Rx): The Thompson Burn Unit is a narrow burn unit located along the northern boundary of the park between Highway 67 and the Arizona Trail on the west and the 2000 Outlet Fire history area on the east. This burn unit actually extends north of the park boundary to Forest Service road 610. As a result, the Thompson Rx will be managed jointly by the NPS and USFS.

This burn unit is approximately 2,000 acres in size and is composed primarily of ponderosa pine with spruce, fir, and aspen. The Thompson burn unit has not experienced recent fire, resulting in a significant build-up of large dead and down fuels.

Objectives specific to the Thompson Rx include creating a defensible space along the park/forest boundary to aid in protecting threatened and endangered species habitat adjacent to the boundary, including Apache trout and Mexican spotted owl habitat.

Smoke: Smoke from these fires will be most visible during ignition operations and will likely gradually diminish after ignitions are completed. It is expected that smoke will continue to be visible until a major rain or snow event occurs.

Smoke will be visible along Highway 67 and Highway 89A as well as from various locations on both the North and South Rims. During the day, smoke is expected to dissipate to the north and northeast. In the evenings, it is likely that smoke will settle into the canyon as temperatures cool, then rise slowly back out during the day as temperatures warm again. Evening smoke may also settle in the House Rock Valley, Marble Canyon, and Page areas. Smoke impacts have the potential to be heavy in the inner canyon.

Fire management staff are working closely with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality- Smoke Management Division to reduce and mitigate potential smoke impacts.

Like all prescribed fires, the plans for the Range and Thompson Prescribed Fires contain a set of parameters which define (among other things) the expected weather and fuel conditions under which the fire can be initiated. Prior to implementing the burns, fire managers will evaluate current conditions and will only ignite the fires if the prescribed conditions are within those parameters.

To learn more about these prescribed fires, you may follow them on InciWeb at <http://inciweb.org/>, or contact Grand Canyon Public Affairs Specialist Shannan Marcak at 928-

638-7958. To learn more about fire management in Grand Canyon National Park, visit the park's web site at <http://www.nps.gov/grca/parkmgmt/firemanagement.htm>.

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